



King County

Department of Community and Human Services

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FINAL PROCUREMENT PLAN

Veterans and Human Services Levy: 2.8

Link educational, vocational and employment opportunities to housing and supportive services

1. Goal (Overarching Investment Strategy)

The Veterans and Human Services Levy Service Improvement Plan (SIP) set a goal of ending homelessness through outreach, prevention, permanent supportive housing and employment (page 18 of SIP)

2. Objective (Specific Investment Strategy)

Link educational, vocational and employment opportunities to housing and supportive services (page 21 of SIP). Investment areas can contribute toward implementation of selected recommendations, including:

- expansion of existing education, employment and vocational training programs for the homeless or formerly homeless;
- expansion of child care services that enable parents to work; and
- dental care vouchers for those whose oral health poses a barrier to finding or maintaining employment.

3. Population Focus

There are two target populations for this strategy:

- Individuals and/or heads of household with incomes below 175 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL)¹, and whose unemployment or low-wage employment threatens their housing stability. This may include working poor at-risk of homelessness or who are paying a disproportionately high portion of their income on housing, homeless, or those in permanent supportive or subsidized housing. They may have other barriers to employment such as lack of appropriate education and training and child care needs.
- Veterans and their families who are in the same category as those described above, but may have additional barriers to employment related to their military service, for example, PTSD, traumatic brain injury (TBI) or mild TBI, or loss of job because of a deployment or repeated deployments

¹ In 2007, 175% FPL is \$17,868 for an individual and \$36,138 for a family of four.

4. Need and Population to be Served

Employment is fundamental to gaining and maintaining financial stability and achieving self-sufficiency. Client data in 2007 from King County's Housing Stability Program show that job loss or reduction in work hours were the most common factors contributing to an eviction or imminent loss of housing. While King County enjoys relative economic prosperity and a strong economy, there are many for whom both gainful employment opportunities and stable housing remain elusive, as the following statistics demonstrate:

- Households below 160 percent of federal poverty level (FPL) are the most at risk of homelessness²
- In King County, an individual earning 175 percent FPL falls short of the living wage by \$8,000; a family of three comes up \$25,000 short³

The relatively low unemployment rate in King County—3.9 percent in September⁴—masks the instability that many very low-income households face as they struggle to make ends meet due to lower paying, less secure jobs without benefits⁵. In our region the growth of low-skilled, low-paying service sector jobs is expected to continue. Poverty data for King County indicate the need to fund programs around the county serving a variety of individuals. The table below outlines the percent of population in each region of King County in 2000 earning less than 200 percent of Federal Poverty Level (FPL).^{6,7}

North	Seattle	East	South
14.1%	25.0%	10.9%	21.7%

Although these data show a larger proportion of residents of Seattle and South King County earning less than 200 percent FPL, clearly there are a significant number of residents throughout the entire county struggling with poverty.

Inadequate income and unstable housing are exacerbated by additional barriers that many very low-income residents face. Mental illness, chemical dependency, substance abuse, disabilities, involvement in the criminal justice system, domestic violence, and lack of affordable child care can create serious obstacles to stable employment and housing leading to homelessness and long-term unemployment. Further, people living in poverty face a loss of public benefits with only slight increases in income from work. This may create a disincentive to increased participation in training and employment activities.

² Housing Development Consortium. <http://www.housingconsortium.org/home/index.php>

³ *Living Wage Jobs in the Current Economy*. Washington Job Gap Study. Northwest Federation of Community Organizations. 2006.

⁴ The unemployment rate provided by ESD includes only those actively seeking work.

⁵ *Why Are People Homeless?* National Coalition for the Homeless. NCH Fact Sheet #1. June 2007.

⁶ Communities Count. 2005. <http://www.communitiescount.org/>

⁷ In 2007, 200% FPL is \$20,420 for an individual and \$41,300 for a family of four.

Veterans

While employment data on veterans in King County is not readily available, we expect these figures to be comparable to national data. Nationally, the overall employment rate among (non-homeless) veterans in the civilian workforce is comparable to non-veterans. However, the 2006 unemployment rate among young veterans age 20-24 who have left the military was nearly 11 percent, more than double that of the general civilian workforce at 4.6 percent.⁸ The U.S. Department of Labor notes that veterans 18-24 tend to rebound fairly quickly, and after approximately 10 months, have employment rates that are much closer to the general population.⁹ This suggests that there is a critical period following military service during which increased access to employment for younger veterans could be especially beneficial.

While some veterans may require only a moderate level of employment assistance to re-enter the civilian job market, others face additional barriers to stable employment and housing, such as homelessness, mental health issues such as PTSD, TBI or mild TBI, physical injuries or even permanent disabilities as a result of their service.

- Approximately 11 percent of all veterans have a service-related disability¹⁰.
- The 2007 One Night Count in King County found that 408 homeless individuals had served in the military¹¹.

Programs receiving funding will be required to ensure that the specific needs of veterans are addressed placing them on a stable path to employment, in some cases preventing extended unemployment and homelessness.

5. Evidence-Based and Best Practices

Best practices for employment programs targeted to this population combine traditional employment services (skills assessment, job readiness, training, job search and placement, and post-employment services) with case management and comprehensive support services to address additional barriers described above¹². This core set of employment services allows agencies to assess specific client needs, determine appropriate services, prepare clients for work, training or educational opportunities (such as GED, ESL, vocational education), and assist them in finding and keeping a job. Effective programs provide services that are client-driven and “customized” to meet the specific needs of each client. Services may be provided in different settings, such as on-site in permanent supportive or subsidized housing, or at employment or multi-service agencies^{13, 14}. King County will contract with employment,

⁸ U.S. Department of Labor. <http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/vets/vets20070017.htm>

⁹ *State of Veterans Employment*. Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training. Presentation to the National Association of State Workforce Agencies. September, 2007.

¹⁰ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>

¹¹ *2007 Annual One Night Count*. Seattle/King County Coalition for the Homeless. <http://www.homelessinfo.org/ONCreportv2.pdf>

¹² Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Blueprint for Change: Ending Chronic Homelessness for Persons with Serious Mental Illnesses and Co-Occurring Substance Use Disorders*. DHHS Pub. No. SMA-04-3870, Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2003.

¹³ *The Next Wave: Employing People with Multiple Barriers to Work*. Corporation for Supportive Housing. 2000.

housing and/or multi-service agencies that can provide these services either directly or through clearly defined partnerships.

One model program is an initiative undertaken by the Corporation for Supportive Housing in partnership with supportive housing providers in New York City, Chicago and San Francisco. The project infused a range of employment services in supportive housing (“place-based”) and addressed multiple barriers to employment. Client-driven case management linked clients to education, jobs, training and other services, including mental health and chemical dependency services¹⁵. Findings from this effort showed that providing both employment and housing can be successful, especially when low-impact jobs are used as a starting point to build motivation to work¹⁶.

In New York, the WeCARE (Wellness, Comprehensive, Assessment, Rehabilitation and Employment) program provides employment-focused services to public assistance clients¹⁷. The model includes comprehensive assessment, service plans tailored to clients’ individual needs and barriers, case management, vocational education or training, job placement services and retention support services following job placement.

Locally, the King County Jobs Initiative (KCJI) and Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) use models that employ best practices highlighted above. These programs work with community based organizations to provide job placement, training, case management, and support and retention services. Both programs focus on removing client barriers to employment, including housing, and seek to place clients in living wage jobs with benefits and career advancement. Since its inception, KCJI has an overall job placement rate of 68 percent, with 87 percent of those individuals still in those jobs after one year, and an average wage of \$11.62 an hour at the time of placement. Both KCJI and SJI serve a significant number of individuals from traditionally underserved populations. Historically, nearly a quarter of SJI’s clients are limited-English speaking, over 80 percent are racial or ethnic minorities, and 27 percent are homeless. KCJI also focuses on individuals exiting the criminal justice system to assist them in the transition to employment opportunities.

Specifically targeted to the homeless, the Homeless Intervention Project (HIP) is another local effort to provide employment services to adults with multiple barriers. In addition to utilizing the best practices identified above, four participating service agencies provide individualized case management, direct support and training services¹⁸. The goal is to prepare clients for employment, quickly increase their housing stability and assist with the transition from homelessness. Client assessments identify barriers and needs, and link clients to mental health, substance abuse treatment and other needed services.

¹⁴ *Recognizing Work as a Priority in Preventing or Ending Homelessness*. The Journal of Primary Prevention. Shaheen, G. & Rio, John. 2007.

¹⁵ *The Next Wave: Employing People with Multiple Barriers to Work*. Corporation for Supportive Housing. 2000.

¹⁶ *Recognizing Work as a Priority in Preventing or Ending Homelessness*. The Journal of Primary Prevention. Shaheen, G. & Rio, John. 2007.

¹⁷ *Innovative Employment Approaches and Programs for Low-Income Families*. The Urban Institute, Center on Labor, Human Services and Population. 2007.

¹⁸ *Developing Community Employment Pathways for Homeless Job Seekers in King County and Washington State*. Seattle/King County Taking Health Care Home Initiative. 2007.

6. Funds Available

The Levy Service Improvement Plan (SIP) allocates a total of \$4.55M to this investment strategy, for veterans and others in need, as identified in the table below.

SIP Amount	2007	2008	2009-11	Total 2007-11
Veterans	\$210,000	\$255,000	\$300,000	\$1,365,000
Others in Need	\$490,000	\$595,000	\$700,000	\$3,185,000
Total	\$700,000	\$850,000	\$1,000,000	\$4,550,000

Future Workforce Investment

The Workforce Education Collaborative is a developing initiative involving collaboration between the workforce development system, foundations, public entities, employment service providers, employers and community colleges. This effort seeks a realignment of the workforce training system to better serve low-income adults by increasing the emphasis on obtaining post secondary workforce education credentials, in addition to finding a job, to help build a long-term career pathways.

The King County Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) will set aside the 2007 available funds (\$700,000) so that consideration may be given to participating in the initiative when it is ready for implementation. This participation would be governed by a specific, additional procurement plan. However, in the interest of ensuring timely use of levy funds, if a procurement plan has not been presented to the levy oversight boards by January 2009, DCHS will bring to the boards at that time an update on the timeline for the Workforce Education Collaborative initiative with a recommendation of either continuing to hold the funds in reserve, or returning the funds to a competitive process according to the guidelines in the current procurement plan.

2008-2011 Funds

A Request for Proposals for employment services linked to housing will be issued in the first quarter of 2008, with contracts projected to begin mid-2008. The table below indicates the yearly estimated amount to be contracted from 2008-11.

Amount Estimated for Contracts	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total 2007-11
Veterans	\$165,000	\$330,000	\$330,000	\$330,000	<i>\$1,155,000</i>
Others in Need	\$385,000	\$770,000	\$770,000	\$770,000	<i>\$2,695,000</i>
Workforce Education Collaborative*					<i>\$700,000</i> (total of 2007 funds available)
Total	<i>\$550,000</i>	<i>\$1,100,000</i>	<i>\$1,100,000</i>	<i>\$1,100,000</i>	<i>\$4,550,000</i>

* If used, funds to be expended over time on as needed basis.

Separate contracts will be established to target and serve veterans and other low-income households. If the response to the RFP does not enable this, HCD staff will work with agencies to set goals regarding outreach and service to veterans within their existing programs. Funding awarded to contracted providers would be continued on a yearly basis contingent upon performance and fund availability. Staff will monitor contract spending and service levels, and report back to the Levy Oversight Boards in two years. If warranted, staff may consider modifying eligibility requirements, such as raising the income eligibility to 200 percent FPL, or other criteria, to ensure service needs are being met.

7. Program Description

Levy funds will be used to expand and enhance current programs providing employment and housing services in King County. King County will contract with nonprofit employment, housing and/or multi-service providers that can provide these services directly or through clearly defined partnerships. Funded programs will utilize models supported by best practices outlined in Section 5 above. Services may be provided either directly or through referral and will include access to supportive services such as mental health, substance abuse and chemical dependency treatment, as well as other services that address client barriers to employment and improve clients' housing stability. Programs will be required to offer retention services for one year following job placement. In addition to increased income and employment, improved housing stability will be a required outcome. Contracted agencies will be informed of other County funded programs, such as the Housing Stability Program and the Landlord Liaison Project, that may assist them in stabilizing client housing.

The SIP also directs the county to provide funds for two specific service needs that support work, child care and dental treatment, to the extent that the latter is a barrier to employment. Agencies will be asked to build these estimated costs into their budgets and instructed to use these funds as a last resort after other potential sources have been exhausted. Funded programs must present a plan describing how their clients will access these services and/or what partnerships they currently have in place that will allow them to do so. Program participants will be provided with care needed to bring their dental health to a level at which it no longer serves as a barrier to finding or keeping a job. In addition, levy funds may be used to provide additional needed work supports to clients, such as transportation, work clothes, prescription glasses, work and/or training equipment and supplies, job-related fees and other needs that facilitate employment.

Case management services will be “customized” to individual client needs and goals. Employment and support services may be provided at agency or housing site, as appropriate. Based on the specific clientele and agency location within the county, the employment programs may provide a different variety and intensity of services.

Either internally or through collaborations with other service agencies, employment or case management staff must consider the impact of employment on public benefits (SSI, TANF, Medicaid, public childcare subsidy, etc.) that clients are receiving, and ensure that loss of benefits does not serve as a disincentive to work. Agencies may need to consult with organizations such as Positive Solutions, which offers workshops and can provide assistance

on public benefits. Funded programs will also be required to obtain training for staff to ensure that the specific needs of veterans are appropriately addressed.

8. Coordination/Partnerships and Alignment Within and Across Systems

Planning for this program was carried out by HCD staff in consultation with the cities of Seattle, Bellevue, Redmond and Federal Way, the King County Jobs Initiative, King County Work Training Program, Seattle/King County Public Health, Veterans Office at WorkSource Renton, local Department of Veterans Affairs representatives, and other nonprofit service providers.

This strategy is aligned with King County Committee to End Homelessness (CEH) Ten Year Plan, with its emphasis on homelessness prevention through increased employment outcomes. The CEH has recently increased this focus by adding member from the employment/workforce development system to its Inter-Agency Council. CEH also co-sponsored, and HCD staff participated in, a homeless employment forum in November that was coordinated by AIDS Housing of Washington.

There are a variety of existing employment agencies and programs in the county that have achieved successful outcomes serving job seekers with multiple barriers. In addition, there has been growing interest and effort toward improving partnerships between employment, housing and other mainstream service providers to achieve better employment outcomes for vulnerable populations. This plan will further develop and enhance those partnerships.

The new Veterans Office at WorkSource in Renton and the Seattle VA Hospital provide additional opportunities for further collaboration and partnerships to better serve veterans in South and East King County.

9. Timeline

HCD will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) based on the draft timeline below:

Employment & Housing RFP	Date
RFP released publicly	Early March 2008
Bidder's Conference	Mid March 2008
RFPs due	Mid April 2008
Review of applications	Late April/May 2008
Awards announced	May 2008
Contracts begin	July 2008

10. Provider Selection/Contracting Process

HCD staff will manage the process of releasing the RFP, reviewing proposals, selecting providers and developing contracts. Both levy oversight boards will be represented on the review panel. In addition, the review panel will represent a variety of relevant skills and interests, and may include DCHS and HCD staff, other public funders, representatives from suburban cities, representation from the employment/workforce system, and if possible, a consumer. An applicant workshop will be held shortly after the release of the RFP to provide potential applicants with additional information and ask questions.

HCD staff will complete a threshold review of proposals to ensure completion and that eligibility requirements for funding are met. Proposals will be assigned to review team members to read and scored based on set criteria. Scores will then be compiled and projects ranked. The review team will meet as a group to discuss the highest ranked proposals, and make a final recommendation to the DCHS Director, who will make the final funding decision. In addition to the written application, this competitive process may include a site visit and interviews with management responsible for program implementation.

11. Geographic Coverage

HCD staff will utilize several strategies for working toward needed geographic coverage throughout King County. First, the RFP will be distributed to as broad an array of agencies as possible. Second, criteria for funding recommendations will take into account programs serving areas of the county with concentrations of very low-income residents with multiple employment barriers and unstable housing. As shown in Section 4, poverty data for North, South and East regions of King County indicate that there is a need to fund programs around the county serving a variety of individuals. Third, staff will monitor contract data carefully to ensure that residents from various regions of the county targeted for this program are being served and make adjustments in contract goals if necessary.

12. Resource Leverage

Levy funds represent only a portion of the total funding necessary to operate programs that offer and coordinate the comprehensive client services described in this procurement plan. Agencies selected to receive funds must possess other resources and have sufficient organizational capacity to be successful. Agencies will be required to bring to the table their current core services (whether employment, housing or multi-service) as leverage. In addition, they must be able to describe how levy funds will enhance those services and enable their clients to achieve both their employment and housing outcomes.

The design of this program also encourages the leveraging of additional resources, including the following:

- For veterans, programs will be required to coordinate with the Veterans' Administration and other organizations serving veterans to ensure that services to which veterans are entitled become part of the service package needed to achieve employment goals;
- Funds for dental, childcare and other employment work supports are to be used after other options are exhausted, or to complement other available funds (e.g., a program may help a client enroll for child care services with the State, and pay their co-payment for a limited period of time as the individual becomes stable in employment);
- Contracted agencies may utilize other levy funded programs such as the Housing Stability Program for emergency housing assistance, and the Landlord Liaison Project for those who may be homeless moving to permanent housing;
- Requiring agencies to understand the impact of employment on public benefits allows clients to leverage these resources and maintain greater stability while still being gainfully employed.

13. Disproportionality Reduction Strategy

A disproportionate number of low-income households have lower educational attainment, hold lower-skilled jobs with limited advancement opportunities, lack access to services and affordable health care, and struggle to find affordable housing. Racial and ethnic minorities make up a disproportionately higher percentage of this already disadvantaged low-income population. Among the homeless, for example, an estimated 62 percent of homeless families are people of color, with African American families accounting for 43 percent of *all* homeless families. Poverty and unemployment are two main factors contributing to homelessness and communities of color are overrepresented across the board, demonstrated by the following U.S. Census data for King County from 2000:

Unemployment Rate

Black/African American	Asian	Alaskan Native	Hispanic	White
9.5%	5%	11%	6.4%	4%

Living below the Federal Poverty Level

Black/African American	Asian	Alaskan Native	Hispanic	White
20%	11.6%	20.6%	18%	6.2%

Other groups facing additional barriers to employment opportunities and stable housing include those who have had involvement with the criminal justice system, those with disabilities, substance abuse problems and physical or mental health issues. For example, the employment rate of working age people with disabilities remains only half that of people without disabilities (in 2005, 38 percent compared to 78 percent respectively)¹⁹.

This plan, which includes linking employment and support services, helps to address both systemic and individual barriers to employment and housing stability. It will help reduce the disproportionate impact to communities of color and other underserved populations by working toward improved long-term outcomes housing and employment outcomes.

We will contract with agencies with demonstrated experience providing culturally appropriate services to diverse populations, and with strong outreach and recruitment plans. Customized service packages that include wrap-around services are an effective strategy for ensuring the greatest employment and housing impacts for clients.

County staff will work with the Levy evaluator to develop and analyze outcomes for various underserved populations to ensure that those disproportionately affected by unemployment and homelessness are being appropriately served, and achieving successful outcomes.

¹⁹ *Empowerment for Americans with Disabilities: Breaking Barriers to Careers and Full Employment*. (http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/2007/NCDEmployment_20071001.htm)

14. Dismantling Systemic/Structural Racism

As stated above, communities of color are overrepresented among both low-income and homeless populations. Further, they are often confronted with multiple barriers, both personal and systemic as they attempt to access services and opportunities for better employment and stable housing.

Funded programs will provide low-income people with the support and services they need to take advantage of opportunities for improved employment and stable housing. Targeting funds in this manner can help guide efforts to provide vulnerable communities with pathways to greater household stability and improved self-sufficiency that are too often not available or out of reach. The increased cross systems collaboration discussed in Sections 8 will also provide opportunities to address barriers to services for people of color through strengthened and new strategic partnerships that emerge.

Staff will continue to seek out and build its list of agencies throughout the County that are committed to providing culturally relevant services to minority communities so that they are informed of RFP opportunities. Staff will also work with agencies to monitor client data and maintain adequate oversight and review of agency service provision and outcomes.

15. Cultural Competency

DCHS is working to continually improve our own cultural competence while at the same time improving our ability to adequately assess the cultural competence of contracted agencies. The Department is also working to determine the type of support and assistance it can provide to enable a broad spectrum of community agencies to be more competitive in seeking public funding.

All RFP's include questions about cultural competency and how the ethnic and cultural make-up of clients served is considered in agency planning, evaluation and service provision. This is a scored element of the RFP review process, and counts toward whether or not an agency is funded for services. County staff continue to refine both how these questions are asked and how to evaluate responses.

Ensuring that appropriate agencies are aware of RFP opportunities, and developing the RFP in a way that encourages partnerships among providers across systems will assist in providing the best possible services to their clientele.

Funded agencies will be required to ensure appropriate staff knowledge of and expertise necessary to meet the specific needs of veterans and their families. Depending on agency experience, program staff may be required to participate in additional trainings related to veterans' needs, benefits and veteran service systems.

16. Improvement in Access to Services

There are a number of ways to improve access to these services. First, funded programs will be required to establish or improve collaboration with other services and housing providers in order to effectively serve their clients. Second, agencies will be required to articulate how county funds will enable them to further improve access to their services. Third, selected

programs will be required to have strong outreach and recruitment plans, as well as a successful track record of providing services. Fourth, criteria for funding award recommendations will take into account agencies that effectively reach and engage traditionally underserved populations, and have a strong emphasis on cultural competence both among staff and within their operations. Lastly, the contracts resulting from this RFP will be awarded so as to provide the greatest geographic coverage around the county.

17. Outcomes

As with all contracts, providers will be required to report service levels and outcomes related to the difference the activity made in the lives of those served. Specific outcomes will vary by service provider and specific population served, and will be negotiated during contract development. Expected outcomes for this program include:

- Increase in work income
- Increase in housing stability
- Job placement or activity that represents an incremental improvement in employment status

18. Process and Outcome Evaluation

The investment strategy to link educational, vocational and employment opportunities to housing and supportive services will be evaluated on both process and outcomes by evaluators hired in the DCHS/Community Services Division. HCD staff will work with the evaluators to measure the effect of the Levy on process issues such as startup activities, contracting processes, collaboration and system level changes that occur, and on the outcomes listed above.